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ABSTRACT

This report updates an earlier study on educational placements of children with mental retardation, comparing data from the 1989-90 school year with the 1990-91 school year. The data indicate that regular class placements increased from 6.7 percent to 7.4 percent from 1989-90 to 1990-91. Resource room placements increased from 20.1 to 23 percent, while separate class placements decreased from 61.1 to 58.3 percent. Separate school placements decreased from 10.3 to 9.8 percent and residential facility placements decreased slightly from 1.4 to 1.1 percent. Tables indicate the percentage of students placed in regular classrooms, resource rooms, separate classes, and separate schools, for the U.S. and for individual states, for both the study years. Another table uses a formula for weighting different placements to compare states on the inclusiveness of their educational settings. The data indicate that for 1990-91: (1) Vermont, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and Minnesota had the highest inclusion scores; (2) New Jersey, New York, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, and Florida had the lowest inclusion scores; and (3) nine states placed fewer than one percent of students with mental retardation in regular classes. The report urges governments, advocacy organizations, and educators to continue efforts to achieve the inclusion of children with mental retardation by the year 2000. (JDD)

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ED 378 760

The Arc

*a national organization on mental retardation*

# 1994 Update on Inclusion in Education of Children with Mental Retardation

By: Sharon Davis, Ph.D., The Arc of the United States

In 1992, The Arc, a national organization on mental retardation, issued a Report Card to the Nation on Inclusion in Education of Students with Mental Retardation (Davis, 1992). Utilizing data provided to the federal government by state education agencies (U.S. Department of Education, 1992), The Arc reported only 6.7 percent of children with mental retardation were educated in regular classrooms alongside children without disabilities during the 1989-90 school year. This finding was surprising in view of federal policy enacted in 1975 (Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) which requires school districts to consider placing a child with disabilities in a regular classroom setting with the use of supplementary aids and services before exploring other more restrictive alternatives. The law also requires that alternative placements be available to meet the individual needs of a child when they cannot be met in the regular classroom.

Through the years, it is obvious that schools have interpreted the law in a manner which assumes segregated settings are appropriate placements for students with mental retardation. In 1989-90, the federal data illustrated that 31.5 percent of all children with disabilities were educated in the regular classroom. Comparing the 6.7 percent figure for children with mental retardation with the 31.5 percent for all children with disabilities reveals that children with mental retardation are almost five times less likely to be educated in a regular classroom.

This paper presents the federal data one year later (school year 1990-91) regarding educational placements of children with mental retardation.

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**Educational Environments of Children with Mental Retardation**

For reporting to the federal government, states must classify student placements according to six different educational environments (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). They are defined below, starting with the most inclusive setting (the regular classroom) and ending with the least inclusive setting (homebound or hospitalized).

> *Regular class* includes students who receive the majority of their education program in a regular classroom and receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day. It includes children placed in a regular class and receiving special education within the regular class, as well as children placed in a regular class and receiving special education outside the regular class.
>
> *Resource room* includes students who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21 percent but no more than 60 percent of the school day. This may include students placed in resource rooms with part-time instruction in a regular class.
>
> *Separate class* includes students who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for more than 60 percent of the school day. Students may be placed in self-contained special classrooms with part-time instruction in regular classes or placed in self-contained classes full time on a regular school campus.
>
> *Separate school* includes students who receive special education and related services in separate day schools for students with disabilities for more than 50 percent of the school day.
>
> *Residential facility* includes students who receive education in a public or private residential facility, at public expense, for more than 50 percent of the school day.
>
> *Homebound/hospital environment* includes students placed in and receiving special education in hospital or homebound programs (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, pg. 15).

Table 1 displays national data on percentage of students with mental retardation in each educational environment for the school years 1989-90 and 1990-91, the most current data available for comparing all states. The national figures represent 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (U.S. Department of Education, 1992 and 1993).

## TABLE 1

**Percentage of Students With Mental Retardation Age 6-21 Placed in Different Educational Environments.**

| Environment | 1989-90 | 1990-91 |
|---|---|---|
| Regular Class | 6.7 | 7.4 |
| Resource Room | 20.1 | 23.0 |
| Separate Class | 61.1 | 58.3 |
| Separate School | 10.3 | 9.8 |
| Residential Facility | 1.4 | 1.1 |
| Homebound/Hospital | .4 | .4 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

As can be seen from Table 1, in 1990-91, 7.4 percent of students with mental retardation received their education in the regular classroom. Another 23 percent were educated in resource rooms. Some of these students may also receive part-time instruction in the regular class setting. Most students, 58.3 percent, were placed in separate classrooms, and almost 11 percent were placed in separate schools or residential facilities.

These data show a slight increase in the percentage of children with mental retardation receiving their education in the regular classroom when compared to the 1989-90 school year (7.4.% compared to 6.7%). Most (69%), however, still receive their education in segregated settings-- separate classrooms and separate schools or facilities.

**How States Compare in Use of Regular Classrooms for Children with Mental Retardation**

Table 2 illustrates the percentage of students placed in regular classrooms by individual states during the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years. States are ranked on 1990-91 percentages from most to least use of regular classrooms. For comparison, the ranking and percentages for each state in 1989-90 are included in the table.

Vermont leads the states in 1990-91 in placing the highest percentage of students with mental retardation (66%) in regular classrooms. Massachusetts has indicated its data cannot be considered accurate (Mary-Beth Fafard, Personal Communication, Dec. 14, 1992). Therefore, even though it is included in this chart, it is eliminated from this analysis. This means the second best state in placing children with mental retardation in regular classrooms is Wyoming at 39 percent, followed by New Hampshire (22%), Montana (21%), Idaho (18%), Washington (16%) and Nebraska (15.7%). By eliminating Massachusetts for inaccurate data, Vermont led the list in 1989-90 and remains the state in 1990-91 with the highest percentage of students with mental retardation in regular classrooms. Wyoming (39%), New Hampshire (22%), Idaho (18%) and Nebraska (16%) placed about the same percentage in both years. Montana increased its percentage from 8 percent to 21 percent from 1989-90 to 1990-91, moving from 15 to 5, and Washington doubled the percentage of students with mental retardation placed in regular classes from 1989-90 to 1990-91 (8% to 16%).

Nine states place fewer than one percent of students with mental retardation in regular classes: Iowa, Nevada, New York, Illinois, Indiana, Arizona, New Jersey, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Six of the states at the bottom were also there in 1989-90: the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey and New York. Three, however, moved up from the bottom nine: Georgia, Florida and Mississippi. These were major moves for Georgia (51 to 17) and Mississippi (44 to 25), but only a slight change for Florida. Three others moved down: Arizona, Nevada and West Virginia. The changes were fairly major for Nevada (21 to 51) and West Virginia (25 to 45), but were slight for Arizona.

# TABLE 2

**State Ranking on Percentage of Students With Mental Retardation Age 6-21 Served in Regular Classes During School Years 1989-90 and 1990-91.**

| 1989-91 Rank | 1990-91 Rank | State | 1989 - 90 Percentage | 1990 - 91 Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | Vermont | 54.06 | 65.94 |
| 1 | 2 | Massachusetts | 59.25 | 60.80 |
| 3 | 3 | Wyoming | 36.02 | 38.56 |
| 4 | 4 | New Hampshire | 25.22 | 22.11 |
| 15 | 5 | Montana | 7.79 | 20.56 |
| 5 | 6 | Idaho | 18.50 | 18.12 |
| 10 | 7 | Washington | 8.14 | 15.82 |
| 6 | 8 | Nebraska | 15.50 | 15.72 |
| 7 | 9 | Arkansas | 11.54 | 10.76 |
| 13 | 10 | North Dakota | 7.94 | 10.40 |
| 16 | 11 | Oregon | 7.19 | 9.56 |
| 18 | 12 | Kentucky | 6.20 | 9.41 |
| 8 | 13 | North Carolina | 11.53 | 9.15 |
| 11 | 14 | Alabama | 8.10 | 8.05 |
| 14 | 15 | Oklahoma | 7.85 | 7.98 |
| 9 | 16 | Maine | 8.41 | 7.89 |
| 51 | 17 | Georgia | .27 | 7.68 |
| 17 | 18 | Utah | 6.25 | 6.95 |
| 12 | 19 | Tennessee | 7.97 | 5.84 |
| 20 | 20 | Alaska | 5.76 | 5.73 |
| 26 | 21 | Delaware | 4.83 | 5.66 |
| 24 | 22 | Missouri | 5.17 | 5.15 |
| 37 | 23 | Texas | 1.62 | 4.92 |
| 22 | 24 | Kansas | 5.29 | 4.55 |
| 44 | 25 | Mississippi | .82 | 3.81 |
| 27 | 26 | Maryland | 3.58 | 3.61 |
| 28 | 27 | Wisconsin | 3.38 | 3.46 |
| 23 | 28 | South Carolina | 5.27 | 3.45 |
| 19 | 29 | Michigan | 6.13 | 3.39 |
| 40 | 30 | Pennsylvania | 1.37 | 2.96 |
| 30 | 31 | California | 3.16 | 2.80 |
| 31 | 32 | Minnesota | 2.95 | 2.76 |
| 32 | 33 | Connecticut | 2.50 | 2.74 |
| 33 | 34 | Virginia | 2.32 | 2.46 |
| 36 | 35 | Hawaii | 1.75 | 2.33 |
| 34 | 36 | Ohio | 2.25 | 2.19 |
| 35 | 37 | Colorado | 2.18 | 2.02 |
| 41 | 38 | Rhode Island | 1.36 | 2.01 |
| 38 | 39 | South Dakota | 1.48 | 1.91 |
| 29 | 40 | New Mexico | 3.18 | 1.62 |
| 39 | 41 | Louisiana | 1.39 | 1.57 |
| 46 | 42 | Florida | .58 | 1.52 |
| 42 | 43 | Puerto Rico | 1.34 | 1.08 |
| 45 | 44 | D.C. | .75 | 0.89 |
| 25 | 45 | West Virginia | 4.97 | 0.61 |
| 47 | 46 | New Jersey | .51 | 0.60 |
| 43 | 47 | Arizona | 1.26 | 0.53 |
| 50 | 48 | Indiana | .30 | 0.53 |
| 49 | 49 | Illinois | .31 | 0.50 |
| 52 | 50 | New York | .26 | 0.44 |
| 21 | 51 | Nevada | 5.31 | 0.34 |
| 48 | 52 | Iowa | .33 | 0.30 |

**How States Compare in Use of Resource Rooms for Educating Children with Mental Retardation**

Table 3 ranks states on 1990-91 data on use of resource rooms for educating children with mental retardation from the most to least use of that environment. A resource room placement is generally considered less inclusive than a regular classroom placement because by definition, children classified for this placement receive 21 to 60 percent of their special education outside the regular classroom. They may, however, receive part-time instruction in regular classrooms.

Some states make extensive use of this classroom setting. Minnesota leads the nation in 1990-91 with 73 percent of children with mental retardation placed in resource rooms, followed by Texas (63%), South Dakota (62%), Iowa (62%) and Kentucky (51%). The five states placing the fewest children with mental retardation in resource rooms are: California (1.9%), New Jersey (2%), Rhode Island (2.5%), Illinois (2.8%) and New York (4.3%). The states placing the fewest children in resource rooms remained the same as in 1989-90. However, two states greatly increased the percentage of children in resource rooms, Minnesota and Texas, to join Iowa, South Dakota and Kentucky at the top. Minnesota went from 40 percent to 73 percent, moving from a rank of 6 to 1, while Texas moved from 13 percent to 63 percent in resource rooms in one year, moving from a rank of 39 to 2.

**How States Compare in the Use of the Separate Classroom Settings for Children with Mental Retardation**

Since children in separate classrooms may have little interaction with nondisabled children, depending on the school district's practices in providing opportunities for them to be integrated in such activities as physical education, lunchroom, etc., it is typically a segregated environment. As indicated in Table 1, the average for all states in 1990-91 is 58.3 percent of students with mental retardation placed in separate classrooms.

As shown in Table 4, the five states with the least use of separate classes are Wyoming with 5 percent of children with mental retardation placed there, followed by Minnesota (21%), South Dakota (22%), Vermont 22%) and Texas (26%). Wyoming,

# TABLE 3

**State Ranking on Percentage of Students With Mental Retardation Age 6-21 Served in Resource Rooms During School Years 1989-90 and 1990-91.**

| 1989-90 Rank | 1990-91 Rank | State | 1989 - 90 Percentage | 1990 - 91 Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 1 | Minnesota | 39.74 | 73.00 |
| 39 | 2 | Texas | 12.69 | 63.27 |
| 2 | 3 | South Dakota | 63.05 | 62.41 |
| 1 | 4 | Iowa | 64.15 | 61.96 |
| 3 | 5 | Kentucky | 54.59 | 50.91 |
| 4 | 6 | Arkansas | 45.12 | 44.42 |
| 12 | 7 | North Carolina | 34.79 | 36.82 |
| 8 | 8 | Puerto Rico | 37.59 | 36.61 |
| 10 | 9 | Wyoming | 35.70 | 36.48 |
| 15 | 10 | Idaho | 31.17 | 35.09 |
| 13 | 11 | Oklahoma | 34.16 | 34.80 |
| 7 | 12 | Maine | 38.18 | 34.19 |
| 11 | 13 | South Carolina | 35.10 | 33.47 |
| 14 | 14 | Nebraska | 32.07 | 32.50 |
| 23 | 15 | Alaska | 24.35 | 31.19 |
| 9 | 16 | Tennessee | 36.00 | 28.91 |
| 17 | 17 | Washington | 19.13 | 28.24 |
| 5 | 18 | Delaware | 40.27 | 28.14 |
| 20 | 19 | Georgia | 26.96 | 27.47 |
| 18 | 20 | West Virginia | 28.94 | 26.69 |
| 16 | 21 | New Mexico | 29.53 | 26.49 |
| 21 | 22 | Wisconsin | 25.96 | 26.46 |
| 29 | 23 | Montana | 19.70 | 24.04 |
| 25 | 24 | Colorado | 21.19 | 23.54 |
| 28 | 25 | Alabama | 20.27 | 22.50 |
| 24 | 26 | Nevada | 22.41 | 22.18 |
| 26 | 27 | Oregon | 21.16 | 22.10 |
| 27 | 28 | Virginia | 21.14 | 21.28 |
| 19 | 29 | Mississippi | 28.07 | 20.58 |
| 32 | 30 | North Dakota | 18.55 | 20.13 |
| 31 | 31 | Hawaii | 19.06 | 19.34 |
| 41 | 32 | Kansas | 10.56 | 18.77 |
| 33 | 33 | Pennsylvania | 16.20 | 18.44 |
| 36 | 34 | Connecticut | 15.20 | 16.48 |
| 35 | 35 | Massachusetts | 15.72 | 15.45 |
| 22 | 36 | Utah | 24.87 | 15.44 |
| 30 | 37 | Arizona | 19.20 | 15.31 |
| 37 | 38 | Michigan | 13.72 | 15.25 |
| 40 | 39 | New Hampshire | 11.64 | 14.85 |
| 38 | 40 | Missouri | 12.92 | 13.36 |
| 43 | 41 | Ohio | 9.08 | 12.52 |
| 42 | 42 | Indiana | 9.15 | 10.02 |
| 44 | 43 | Vermont | 8.66 | 9.23 |
| 34 | 44 | D.C. | 15.90 | 7.91 |
| 45 | 45 | Maryland | 7.73 | 7.86 |
| 46 | 46 | Louisiana | 6.28 | 6.18 |
| 47 | 47 | Florida | 4.52 | 4.83 |
| 48 | 48 | New York | 4.03 | 4.27 |
| 49 | 49 | Illinois | 2.59 | 2.79 |
| 50 | 50 | Rhode Island | 2.14 | 2.49 |
| 51 | 51 | New Jersey | 1.84 | 1.95 |
| 52 | 52 | California | 1.74 | 1.92 |

# TABLE 4

**State Ranking on Percentage of Students With Mental Retardation Age 6-21 Served in Separate Classes During School Years 1989-90 and 1990-91.**

| 1989-90 Rank | 1990-91 Rank | State | 1989 - 90 Percentage | 1990 - 91 Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Wyoming | 9.64 | 5.28 |
| 2 | 2 | Massachusetts | 18.05 | 17.42 |
| 22 | 3 | Minnesota | 53.90 | 20.79 |
| 3 | 4 | South Dakota | 22.75 | 21.69 |
| 6 | 5 | Vermont | 33.11 | 22.37 |
| 46 | 6 | Texas | 75.07 | 26.36 |
| 5 | 7 | Iowa | 29.08 | 34.08 |
| 8 | 8 | Kentucky | 36.34 | 37.07 |
| 7 | 9 | Arkansas | 33.75 | 37.18 |
| 12 | 10 | Idaho | 44.84 | 43.67 |
| 10 | 11 | North Carolina | 44.05 | 44.66 |
| 4 | 12 | Delaware | 26.29 | 45.74 |
| 11 | 13 | Nebraska | 44.69 | 46.29 |
| 14 | 14 | New Hampshire | 47.09 | 47.28 |
| 20 | 15 | New Jersey | 51.71 | 48.54 |
| 13 | 16 | Puerto Rico | 46.04 | 48.92 |
| 9 | 17 | Nevada | 41.67 | 48.99 |
| 15 | 18 | Maine | 47.89 | 52.15 |
| 18 | 19 | Maryland | 50.92 | 53.05 |
| 40 | 20 | Montana | 71.11 | 54.18 |
| 23 | 21 | Oklahoma | 54.98 | 54.56 |
| 21 | 22 | Michigan | 52.38 | 54.97 |
| 26 | 23 | Washington | 59.80 | 55.36 |
| 17 | 24 | South Carolina | 49.84 | 56.20 |
| 19 | 25 | D.C. | 51.56 | 56.23 |
| 24 | 26 | Missouri | 56.83 | 57.26 |
| 16 | 27 | Tennessee | 48.06 | 58.83 |
| 39 | 28 | Alaska | 69.90 | 62.16 |
| 29 | 29 | New York | 63.25 | 62.25 |
| 35 | 30 | Georgia | 68.38 | 62.44 |
| 27 | 31 | Connecticut | 60.18 | 62.73 |
| 33 | 32 | North Dakota | 67.76 | 64.34 |
| 30 | 33 | Wisconsin | 63.93 | 64.58 |
| 49 | 34 | Kansas | 78.68 | 65.58 |
| 34 | 35 | Oregon | 68.19 | 66.04 |
| 38 | 36 | Alabama | 69.07 | 66.83 |
| 25 | 37 | West Virginia | 59.43 | 67.35 |
| 41 | 38 | Pennsylvania | 71.15 | 67.81 |
| 31 | 39 | New Mexico | 63.97 | 67.92 |
| 37 | 40 | Virginia | 68.54 | 69.03 |
| 32 | 41 | Mississippi | 66.19 | 70.42 |
| 44 | 42 | Colorado | 73.76 | 71.68 |
| 28 | 43 | Utah | 62.51 | 71.94 |
| 42 | 44 | Florida | 72.20 | 72.19 |
| 36 | 45 | Arizona | 68.53 | 72.94 |
| 45 | 46 | Illinois | 74.41 | 74.70 |
| 50 | 47 | California | 80.90 | 74.98 |
| 47 | 48 | Hawaii | 75.77 | 76.15 |
| 43 | 49 | Louisiana | 73.15 | 76.33 |
| 38 | 50 | Rhode Island | 77.26 | 77.56 |
| 51 | 51 | Indiana | 83.02 | 80.99 |
| 52 | 52 | Ohio | 84.21 | 81.38 |

South Dakota and Vermont were at the top of the list in 1989-90 for placing lower percentages of children with mental retardation in separate classes. They are joined in 1990-91 by Minnesota and Texas. Minnesota reduced placements in separate classes from 54 percent to 21 percent, moving from 22 to 3 in rank; Texas reduced placements from 75 percent to 26 percent, moving from 46 to 6 in rank. Delaware, which was in the top five in 1989-90 increased use of separate classes from 26 percent to 46 percent, moving from 4 to 12 in rank. The five states with the most use of separate classes are Ohio with 82 percent of children with mental retardation placed there, followed by Indiana (81%), Rhode Island (78%), Louisiana (76%) and Hawaii (76%). These states placed about the same percentages in 1989-90. Kansas, in the bottom five in 1989-90, reduced placements in separate classes from 79 percent in 1989-90 to 66 percent in 1990-91, moving from 49 to 34 in rank.

**How States Compare on Use of Separate Schools for Children with Mental Retardation**

Table 5 ranks states on 1990-91 percentages from least to most use of separate schools which is considered the least inclusive environment. This table includes children placed in separate day schools and separate residential facilities. By federal definition, children are classified as receiving special education in these settings when they are there for more than 50 percent of the school day. In actual practice, for most children based in separate schools, this is the only environment they experience for their education.

The five states least likely to place children with mental retardation in separate schools are Alaska with less than one percent of children with mental retardation placed there, followed by Washington (.5%), Montana (1.1%), New Mexico (1.5%) and Hawaii (1.7%). In changes from 1989-90 to 1990-91, Washington and New Mexico replaced Alabama and Kentucky, but these changes were minor. The states using

# TABLE 5

**State Ranking on Percentage of Students Age 6-21 Served in Separate Schools During School Years 1989-90 and 1990-91.**

| 1989-90 Rank | 1990-91 Rank | State | 1989 - 90 Percentage | 1990 - 91 Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Alaska | 0.00 | 0.46 |
| 6 | 2 | Washington | 2.82 | 0.52 |
| 2 | 3 | Montana | 0.56 | 1.13 |
| 7 | 4 | New Mexico | 2.83 | 1.46 |
| 10 | 5 | Hawaii | 3.18 | 1.73 |
| 9 | 6 | Oregon | 3.00 | 1.70 |
| 12 | 7 | Vermont | 3.49 | 2.05 |
| 4 | 8 | Kentucky | 2.44 | 2.23 |
| 15 | 9 | Georgia | 4.28 | 2.35 |
| 3 | 10 | Alabama | 2.41 | 2.44 |
| 8 | 11 | Oklahoma | 2.84 | 2.44 |
| 5 | 12 | Colorado | 2.77 | 2.60 |
| 13 | 13 | Idaho | 3.87 | 2.79 |
| 11 | 14 | Minnesota | 3.21 | 3.22 |
| 21 | 15 | Iowa | 6.37 | 3.61 |
| 32 | 16 | Texas | 10.15 | 3.73 |
| 16 | 17 | Ohio | 4.35 | 3.79 |
| 14 | 18 | Mississippi | 4.26 | 4.38 |
| 19 | 19 | North Dakota | 5.74 | 4.46 |
| 23 | 20 | West Virginia | 6.43 | 5.16 |
| 22 | 21 | Massachusetts | 6.39 | 5.32 |
| 24 | 22 | Wisconsin | 6.59 | 5.40 |
| 25 | 23 | Nebraska | 7.42 | 5.42 |
| 17 | 24 | Maine | 5.09 | 5.48 |
| 20 | 25 | Utah | 6.03 | 5.54 |
| 28 | 26 | Tenessee | 7.80 | 6.09 |
| 31 | 27 | South Carolina | 9.43 | 6.68 |
| 27 | 28 | Virginia | 7.66 | 6.71 |
| 29 | 29 | Arkansas | 8.80 | 7.15 |
| 26 | 30 | Indiana | 7.45 | 8.33 |
| 30 | 31 | North Carolina | 9.26 | 9.15 |
| 33 | 32 | Pennsylvania | 10.86 | 10.45 |
| 36 | 33 | Puerto Rico | 13.25 | 10.68 |
| 34 | 34 | Arizona | 10.91 | 10.78 |
| 18 | 35 | Kansas | 5.36 | 10.98 |
| 35 | 36 | South Dakota | 12.66 | 13.92 |
| 38 | 37 | New Hampshire | 15.85 | 15.31 |
| 41 | 38 | Louisiana | 18.70 | 15.41 |
| 39 | 39 | Rhode Island | 18.17 | 17.45 |
| 42 | 40 | Connecticut | 21.32 | 17.77 |
| 40 | 41 | Wyoming | 18.48 | 19.04 |
| 37 | 42 | California | 14.20 | 20.25 |
| 47 | 43 | Delaware | 27.78 | 20.47 |
| 43 | 44 | Florida | 22.30 | 21.14 |
| 44 | 45 | Illinois | 22.64 | 21.95 |
| 45 | 46 | Missouri | 23.67 | 23.59 |
| 46 | 47 | Michigan | 27.58 | 26.28 |
| 48 | 48 | Nevada | 30.60 | 27.98 |
| 50 | 49 | New York | 31.88 | 32.65 |
| 49 | 50 | D.C. | 31.69 | 34.49 |
| 51 | 51 | Maryland | 37.59 | 35.22 |
| 52 | 52 | New Jersey | 45.59 | 48.48 |

separate schools the most are New Jersey (48%), Maryland (35%), the District of Columbia (34%), New York (33%) and Nevada (28%), the same states with the most use in 1989-90.

**How States Compare in Overall Use of Inclusive Settings for Children with Mental Retardation**

Because states vary tremendously in their use of different educational environments for students with mental retardation, The Arc devised a formula for weighting different placements in order to compare states on the inclusiveness of the settings in which they educate these children. Children placed in the most inclusive setting, regular class, are assigned a weight of 4; those placed in the resource room are assigned a weight of 2; those in separate classes a weight of 1; and those in separate schools which are not at all inclusive are assigned a weight of 0. Using these weights, an inclusion score is calculated for each state. These are exhibited in Table 6 for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Vermont has the highest inclusion score in 1990-91, followed by Wyoming, Idaho, Montana and Minnesota. Again, although Massachusetts is included in the table because it is included in the federal data, it is excluded from this analysis because state officials indicate the data do not accurately reflect the educational environments of children with mental retardation in the state. As is illustrated, New Jersey received the lowest inclusion score. Other states rounding out the bottom six are New York, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland and Florida.

Several factors result in high inclusion scores. In Vermont's case, it clearly leads the nation because it places a much higher percentage of students with mental retardation in regular classrooms. Sixty-six percent receive their education in this setting. This percentage is almost twice that of the state ranked next in use of regular classrooms, Wyoming, with 39 percent. Another factor affecting a state receiving a higher inclusion score is extensive use of the resource room. This helps explain the

# TABLE 6

**State Ranking on Inclusion Score.**

| 1989-90 Rank | 1990-91 Rank | State | 1989 - 90 Inclusion Score | 1990 - 91 Inclusion Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | Vermont | 2.68 | 3.06 |
| 1 | 2 | Massachusetts | 2.88 | 2.94 |
| 3 | 3 | Wyoming | 2.25 | 2.34 |
| 4 | 4 | Idaho | 1.84 | 1.87 |
| 17 | 5 | Montana | 1.43 | 1.85 |
| 16 | 6 | Minnesota | 1.45 | 1.78 |
| 8 | 7 | Kentucky | 1.71 | 1.77 |
| 39 | 8 | Texas | 1.07 | 1.76 |
| 15 | 9 | Washington | 1.51 | 1.75 |
| 7 | 10 | Nebraska | 1.71 | 1.74 |
| 6 | 11 | Arkansas | 1.71 | 1.70 |
| 5 | 12 | New Hampshire | 1.72 | 1.66 |
| 10 | 13 | Iowa | 1.59 | 1.59 |
| 12 | 14 | Oklahoma | 1.55 | 1.56 |
| 9 | 15 | North Carolina | 1.60 | 1.55 |
| 13 | 16 | South Dakota | 1.55 | 1.54 |
| 11 | 17 | Maine | 1.59 | 1.53 |
| 21 | 18 | Oregon | 1.40 | 1.49 |
| 31 | 19 | Georgia | 1.24 | 1.48 |
| 20 | 20 | Alaska | 1.42 | 1.48 |
| 22 | 21 | North Dakota | 1.38 | 1.47 |
| 18 | 22 | Alabama | 1.42 | 1.44 |
| 14 | 23 | Tennessee | 1.52 | 1.40 |
| 19 | 24 | South Carolina | 1.42 | 1.37 |
| 26 | 25 | Wisconsin | 1.30 | 1.31 |
| 23 | 26 | Utah | 1.38 | 1.31 |
| 25 | 27 | New Mexico | 1.36 | 1.31 |
| 27 | 28 | Puerto Rico | 1.29 | 1.30 |
| 29 | 29 | Mississippi | 1.26 | 1.28 |
| 30 | 30 | Colorado | 1.25 | 1.27 |
| 32 | 31 | Hawaii | 1.21 | 1.25 |
| 28 | 32 | Delaware | 1.27 | 1.25 |
| 24 | 33 | West Virginia | 1.38 | 1.23 |
| 34 | 34 | Virginia | 1.20 | 1.22 |
| 33 | 35 | Kansas | 1.21 | 1.21 |
| 37 | 36 | Pennsylvania | 1.09 | 1.17 |
| 36 | 37 | Ohio | 1.11 | 1.15 |
| 43 | 38 | Connecticut | 1.01 | 1.07 |
| 35 | 39 | Arizona | 1.12 | 1.06 |
| 40 | 40 | Missouri | 1.05 | 1.05 |
| 42 | 41 | Indiana | 1.03 | 1.03 |
| 41 | 42 | Michigan | 1.05 | 0.99 |
| 45 | 43 | Louisiana | 0.92 | 0.95 |
| 38 | 44 | Nevada | 1.08 | 0.95 |
| 46 | 45 | Rhode Island | 0.88 | 0.91 |
| 44 | 46 | California | 0.97 | 0.90 |
| 48 | 47 | Florida | 0.84 | 0.88 |
| 50 | 48 | Maryland | 0.81 | 0.83 |
| 49 | 49 | Illinois | 0.81 | 0.82 |
| 47 | 50 | D.C. | 0.86 | 0.76 |
| 51 | 51 | New York | 0.73 | 0.73 |
| 52 | 52 | New Jersey | 0.58 | 0.55 |

inclusion score for Minnesota and several other states. States with lower inclusion scores tend to make much greater use of separate classroom and separate school placements

The states' scores for 1990-91 were compared with those for 1989-90 to identify any changes. The bottom six states remained at the bottom. The top three also remained the same. Montana moved up from 17th place in 1989-90 to 4th (omitting Massachusetts) in 1990-91, and Minnesota moved from 16th to 5th. Just below these top five were Kentucky, remaining about the same, Texas and Washington. Texas ranked 39th in 1989-90 and 8th in 1990-91; Washington ranked 15th in 1989-90 and 9th in 1990-91.

**Limitations of the Data**

Although the use of this federal data has sometimes been criticized because of concerns about its accuracy, it is reported to the United States Congress by the U.S. Department of Education after being collected and reported by all states annually. Therefore, it does provide a useful basis for examining educational settings for children with mental retardation. Among the concerns is that state education agencies are dependent on local education agencies for accurate reporting of the data which means that categories of placements defined in terms of time spent in special education could be subject to different interpretations by various school districts. Massachusetts, for example, has acknowledged problems with its collection system and indicates the problems will be resolved for 1992 - 1993 data.

The limitations of the data are further reinforced when examining states with dramatic, and in fact suspect, changes from one year to the next. Is it plausible, for example, to assume Texas placed 75 percent of children with mental retardation in separate classes in 1989-90 and reduced the percentage to 26 percent in 1990-91, primarily by increasing placements in resource rooms from 13 percent to 63 percent? More likely, the data does not accurately reflect placements in one or both of those years.

Because of this, chapters of The Arc are urged to examine their state's standings, and if the data do not reflect what the observed situation appears to be, to ask questions. A staff person from a local chapter in Massachusetts who advocates for families wanting inclusive education wrote to the state education agency after The Arc's 1992 Report Card to the Nation on Inclusion of Students with Mental Retardation was published and questioned the numbers of children reported to be in regular classes. This resulted in the state acknowledging it was using an outmoded formula in calculating placements.

The Arc recognizes that placement in the regular education setting does not necessarily mean that a child with mental retardation is being provided an appropriate education and fully included in the life of the school. However, proximity is a necessary first step. Children must be provided appropriate supports to succeed academically and socially in the regular classroom, and this data does not measure how well schools are doing in this regard.

**The Arc's Call to Action**

The Arc, in its 1992 Report Card to the Nation on Inclusion in Education of Students with Mental Retardation called on the nation to work toward the goal of inclusion for all children with mental retardation by the Year 2000. The Arc continues to advocate for major change in how special education and related services are provided. While the data indicate that slow progress is being made, The Arc again calls on the federal government, state governments, advocacy organizations, including all chapters of The Arc, and, of course, leaders of the nation's schools to continue efforts to achieve the inclusion of children with mental retardation throughout the country by the Year 2000. Specific strategies are described in the 1992 report.

The Arc's 1990 position statement on education (Position Statements of The Arc, 1994) affirms the following principles that reflect the beliefs of the association regarding the inclusion of students with mental retardation in schools across the nation:

- All schools should value all students and include them in all aspects of school life.

- Preparation for life in the community best occurs when all students of different backgrounds and abilities learn and socialize together in classrooms and other school settings where all have a chance to achieve and receive instruction designed to develop and enhance successful living within the community.
- Each student with a disability belongs in an age-appropriate classroom with peers who are not disabled.
- Each student has the right to receive individualized education which provides choices, meets the student's needs and offers the necessary support.

The Arc's 1992 Report Card continues to receive considerable attention. It has been used in a variety of situations by advocates working to achieve more inclusive placements, including the preparation of lawsuits pursuing regular classroom placement for students with mental retardation. Many individual schools are committed to inclusion and are making substantial progress toward including children with mental retardation in regular classroom settings. However, there are also school systems where no change is occurring and others which are fighting to maintain segregation for most students with mental retardation. Parents in some of these communities seeking these opportunities for their children have been successful as the result of a series of positive judicial decisions.

In the 1992 report, The Arc noted that research was beginning to document benefits of inclusion to both children with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. Such evidence has continued to develop. However, The Arc went on to state that inclusion does not have to be justified on the basis of research, for it is really a matter of human dignity. Only when students with and without disabilities are educated side by side can they experience the richness of a society that values and includes all its citizens. Like all students, those with mental retardation have the right and must be given the opportunity to attend regular schools and regular classes, and to receive an appropriate education in those settings. Continuing to pursue this goal remains a challenge to all chapters of The Arc.

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